NCA
VOC FOR IOP/FN
BACKGROUNDER NO. 5-5690 APRIL 5, 1978
CLAUDIO ESKENAZI

BOLIVIA AND CHILE

ANNCR:

DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS BETWEEN BOLIVIA AND CHILE WERE BROKEN LAST MONTH IN THE LATEST CHAPTER IN A CENTURY-OLD DISPUTE INVOLVING THREE SOUTH AMERICAN NATIONS. VOA'S CLAUDIO ESKENAZI HAS THIS BACKGROUND REPORT.

NARR:

IN THE SO-CALLED GREAT PACIFIC WAR OF 1879, VICTORIOUS CHILE ACQUIRED TERRITORY BELONGING TO ITS TWO FOES, BOLIVIA AND PERU. BUT MORE THAN THAT, BOLIVIA WAS FORCED TO GIVE UP ITS ONLY ACCESS TO THE PACIFIC OCEAN. IT THUS BECAME A LAND-LOCKED NATION AND HAD TO RELY ON THE GOODWILL OF ITS NEIGHBORS TO REACH THE SEA LANES THAT ARE SO VITAL TO ITS INTERNATIONAL TRADE. FOR THE LAST CENTURY ONE OF BOLVIA'S MAJOR FOREIGN POLICY OBJECTIVES HAS BEEN THE RECOVERY OF AN OUTLET TO THE PACIFIC, OF WHICH -- IN THE WORDS OF A BOLIVIAN OFFICIAL -- "BOLIVIA WAS BRUTALLY DEPRIVED THROUGH AN UNJUSTIFIABLE WAR OF CONQUEST."

AFTER DECADES OF BITTER RHETORIC AND DISTRUST ON BOTH SIDES, BOLIVIA AND CHILE FINALLY CAME TO THE NEGOTIATING TABLE THREE YEARS AGO TO DISCUSS THE POSSIBILITY OF GIVING BOLIVIA A PACIFIC OUTLET. CHILE PROPOSED CEDING A CORRIDOR TO BOLIVIA IN EXCHANGE FOR AN EQUAL AMOUNT OF BOLIVIAN TERRITORY ELSEWHERE ALONG THEIR BORDER. AT THE SAME TIME, TALKS WERE ALSO HELD BETWEEN CHILE AND PERU REGARDING THE CESSION OF LANDS TO THIRD PARTIES. PERU SUGGESTED THAT THE STRIP OF LAND CHILE WOULD CEDE TO BOLVIA BE PLACED UNDER DUAL BOLIVIAN-PERUVIAN SOVEREIGNTY. THE TERRITORY IN QUESTION HAD BELONGED

TO PERU BEFORE IT WAS ANNEXED BY CHILE AFTER THE PACIFIC WAR. CHILE REJECTED THE IDEA AND THE DISCUSSIONS WENT TO FURTHER.

LAST MONTH BOLIVIA BROKE DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH CHILE IN APPARENT EXASPERATION OVER THE LACK OF ANY NEW PROGRESS IN THE PACIFIC OUTLET TALKS. HOWEVER, IT IS FELT THAT THE THRE-E-YEAR TALKS BETWEEN BOLIVIA AND CHILE DID LAY SOME IMPORTANT GROUND-WORK FOR THE FUTURE. AMONG OTHER THINGS, CHILE, FOR THE FIRST TIME DID OFFER A LAND COR-RIDOR TO BOLIVIA, AND THE FORMULA WAS ACCEPTED BY PERU WITH CERTAIN RESERVATIONS. BUT NO FURTHER TALKS BETWEEN BOLIVIA AND CHILE ARE EXPECTED TO TAKE PLACE BEFORE BOLIVIA'S MILITARY RULERS TURN OVER POWER TO ELECTED OFFICIALS NEXT JULY.

JS/PY